

ADDENDUM 1

Computer Programming/Software Solution for Fiscal Note and Performance Note Information Gathering, RFP No. 2012-06

July 12, 2012

Note: All questions and answers, except the answer to No. 12 and the question and answer to No. 22 are paraphrased from the questions asked, and answers given, during the responders' conference.

Question #1

How well do you want this to integrate with the current system with the documents, BILLS, etc.? Is this a "stand alone" system or will it tie to the current system?

Answer #1

Information relating to fiscal notes and performance notes will be taken from BILLS. This includes information like the BILL's sponsor, short title, and status. This data set is maintained by the OLRGC. The LFA currently uses that data to populate its fiscal note tables. Currently, the LFA copies this data into its system. The BILL number is used as the key ID. The SOFTWARE SOLUTION may utilize this data set, but the integration will be "read only." The SOFTWARE SOLUTION will gather fiscal note information from governmental and non-governmental entities. The LFA will use the information gathered to produce a fiscal note for a BILL. After the data is collected by the SOFTWARE SOLUTION, the LFA will import the data or link the data into an in-house application to write fiscal notes.

In the future (not part of this RFP), the LFA may expand the SOFTWARE SOLUTION to also include the fiscal note drafting process.

Question #2

Will the SOFTWARE SOLUTION just collect data, email a consolidated report to the analyst, and then stop?

Answer #2

For the reporting aspect of the SOFTWARE SOLUTION, there will be two pieces. One is the creation of an electronic report document (which may or may not be email) that includes all data submitted for a fiscal note or a performance note. The SOFTWARE SOLUTION will also populate a database and store the data so that the LFA can access and transfer information from the table. In addition to the electronic report document, the LFA needs access to the data in real time and the ability to determine the status of submission by an entity.

Question #3

Can multiple people from a single entity add data to the same report or will only one person from each entity fill out reports?

Answer #3

Either is a possibility, depending on the entity. For example, the courts coordinate all responses through a single point of contact. Other agencies have multiple contacts below the department level that may go as deep as the division level, bureau level, or program level. Currently, the system is set up as a “one to many” relationship where a section of the Utah Code is related to many agencies (designated in one data table) and the agency has many contacts (designated by another data table). Each request for information sent to an individual who represents an entity will only have one response from that individual.

Question #4

Do you also have a situation where you have one contact who responds to BILLS for multiple agencies?

Answer #4

No. However, some entities may have input on all or a large number of BILLS. For example, the attorney general’s office usually responds on every BILL (in addition to the entity that is directly impacted by the BILL) whether or not that BILL impacts the attorney general’s enabling statute. Usually, entities sign up for notification based on the sections of code that impact them.

Question #5

So, for example, would one person be providing fiscal information on a BILL for both Commerce and the DABC?

Answer #5

That's a unique situation where one person ran two agencies. The way we were doing that before, it wasn't an agency director that was responding. Instead, there was a contact at DABC and a contact at Commerce. However, the SOFTWARE SOLUTION should allow designated contacts to play a supervisory role over entities under their authority who are providing information. For example, the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget may want view responses from multiple agencies on a BILL. The SOFTWARE SOLUTION might not allow a person with this access to change responses, but may allow them to view the information submitted.

Question #6

Will there be a situation where, within one entity, there might be several contacts working on the same fiscal note response at the same time?

Answer #6

That depends on how you define entity. That situation is not likely. Normally, there would only be one response from an entity (department, division, office, bureau, program, etc.). The LFA does not want competing responses from one entity. However, if one BILL impacts a large portion of a department, the LFA may receive input from several different divisions within the department. Thus, the LFA would create one fiscal note that is derived from consolidated data submitted by a number of different people within the department.

Access control in designing the SOFTWARE SOLUTION should be based on a user level rather than an agency level. Currently the LFA has a process where each section of the Utah Code that is impacted by a BILL is linked to all entities that are impacted by that section. Then, an email is sent to each contact for that entity. Thus, an email may go out to twenty-five individuals representing five different agencies depending on how they've enrolled in the notification system.

Question #7

In item number two it talks about non-government entities using the system. Could you give an example of what a non-government entity might be?

Answer #7

Examples would be the Utah League of Cities and Towns, the Utah Association of Counties, the Superintendents Association, or the Utah Sheriff's Association. A fiscal note addresses fiscal impact on state government, local government impact, business, and individuals. Occasionally, the LFA receives feedback from businesses or chambers of commerce. The SOFTWARE SOLUTION needs to provide for this circumstance.

Question #8

When new users are created, will this be done by the users registering and the LFA approving the registration account for that user or will the LFA create user accounts directly?

Answer #8

We request that responders propose a solution on this issue. Currently, the LFA has a table of email addresses that are used as a contact's ID. The LFA puts the email address in a table, assigns it to an entity, and sends a BILL to that entity. Security and access control are important considerations.

Question #9

Is there a type of database that you prefer, like Oracle or SQL Server?

Answer #9

We don't have a preference. LFA uses MS SQL Server in-house for its production system.

Question #10

Regarding the data on the SQL Server, would the LFA like the data to be recorded in real time? Is there an option to populate it after the fact?

Answer #10

We request that responders propose a solution on this issue. We want access to the data, whether through an ODBC connection or some other electronic connection to the data offsite, or directly from the LFA's server. The LFA must have immediate access to information when it is submitted. Security is an important consideration on this issue.

Question #11

Are there a certain number of required references?

Answer #11

We do not have a maximum number of references, but we would like a responder to provide at least three.

Question #12

In training, how many people do you suppose we will need to train?

Answer #12

About 150. This can be done in groups.

Question #13

We are assuming that the actual development can be done off-site at the vendor location. Is that correct?

Answer #13

Yes, that is an option.

Question #14

Will the managing department for the SOFTWARE SOLUTION be present on-site?

Answer # 14

LFA's IT staff will be present on-site, but a representative from the responder is not required to be present on-site.

Also, it is important to note that whether the SOFTWARE SOLUTION is hosted or not hosted, the LFA will require, up front, a complete copy of the code and the LFA will own the code. Even with a hosted system, the LFA will have a complete, unrestricted copyright up front.

Question #15

In the RFP it explained that the existing system uses a table that allows a person to enter a new BILL into the table, which then generates a list of entities that the BILL is sent to and a list of individuals, at the entity, to be notified. Does that occur through a portal or a database?

Answer #15

There are multiple databases and tables. Every BILL that is drafted impacts certain sections of the Utah Code (except for brand new areas of code). Each BILL contains a table of the sections of the Utah Code that it impacts. Another table indicates the agencies that are interested in each of those sections. Another table lists the individuals that represent these entities. Currently, an in-house application runs a query and builds email from those tables. It attaches to the email a copy of the BILL and a form for providing fiscal information. The email is sent to the identified interested parties. From that point, a manual process begins. It is this manual, information gathering process that will be replaced with the SOFTWARE SOLUTION. Currently, the LFA gets responses through email, phone calls, faxes, notes, and etc.

Question #16

Will the LFA continue using its existing system for writing fiscal notes after the information is gathered through the SOFTWARE SOLUTION?

Answer #16

Yes. We may add to the SOFTWARE SOLUTION in the future to incorporate the fiscal note writing process, but that is not part of the current RFP.

Question #17

The RFP mentions that supporting documents need to be stored. How often are supporting documents submitted with a BILL or a financial report, and how large are these documents? Can the file type be limited?

Answer #17

There are cases where multiple electronic files are attached and cases where no supporting documentation is attached. Sometimes a BILL has no fiscal impact. One of the largest attachments ever received contained about three hundred to five hundred pages. As far as limiting the file type, we would be willing to consider suggestions by responders. The most common types of files that we get are Word files, PDF files, and Excel files.

Question #18

How are performance notes different than fiscal notes?

Answer #18

The performance note process is less complex than the fiscal note process. There will be cases where multiple performance notes will be written on a BILL, but for the most part it's going to be one respondent to one BILL. The respondent, and the BILL sponsor, write independent performance notes.

If a BILL creates a new program, or expands an existing program, the LFA determines whether it qualifies for a performance note and then notifies the agency or sponsor of the need for a performance note, whereupon they write the performance note on a form provided by the LFA and return it to the LFA. This process will occur within the SOFTWARE SOLUTION. There are between 25 and 50 performance notes per year as opposed to eleven hundred fiscal notes per year.

A performance note is posted on the Legislature's website as a "related document" to a BILL. The sponsor has the option of writing a competing performance note to a performance note written by an entity. A performance note indicates how the success of a program will be measured. Both performance notes and fiscal notes are related to a BILL number, so there will need to be a designator that establishes whether a performance note or a fiscal note is being addressed.

Question #19

So, the performance note would be created in the SOFTWARE SOLUTION. You would select a BILL and request a performance note that will be sent out to the individuals concerned. Those individuals are going to use the SOFTWARE SOLUTION to fill out the performance note and then, when they are done, are you saying that it has to go directly to the website or are you saying that if we get it back into your hands you guys can handle it from there?

Answer #19

The answer is the second case. It would be an electronic document returned to the LFA just like a fiscal note. The LFA would then take care of posting it on the website.

Question #20

Can you talk a little bit about the required support during the General Session? What kind of support exactly?

Answer #20

During the General Session, we need zero down time for forty-five days at least. It's a very intense period of time. BILLS should not be held up due to technical issues. A BILL can't pass without a fiscal note, so it has to work pretty seamlessly during the General Session. The window for fiscal notes starts in September really, sometimes before that. Things get more intense starting after Thanksgiving, and increase in intensity the third week in January through the first week of March. The LFA needs 24/7 support for that period from January to March (i.e. General Session).

Question #21

The nature of the support is just keeping the SOFTWARE SOLUTION up right? It's not necessarily development of resources?

Answer #21

Yes, the nature of the support is keeping the SOFTWARE SOLUTION up and running. There may be cases where changes to the law require changes to the process. That would not necessarily occur during the General Session, but it may be something as simple calling a fiscal note a

“dynamic fiscal note” rather than a “static fiscal note.” It could include changes on forms that the responder would create. There may be cases where they ask that we collect additional data, but usually that’s after the fact. A BILL would have to pass in order to require those changes, so there would usually be time between sessions to implement those changes in the system.

Once the SOFTWARE SOLUTION is provided to the LFA, the LFA will test the SOFTWARE SOLUTION during the first year (the 2013 General Session). During the 2013 General Session, the SOFTWARE SOLUTION will run as a parallel system to the current paper system in order to make sure that there are not unforeseen circumstances that will require programming changes on the fly. Our intention is to choose one or two analysts who will use the SOFTWARE SOLUTION during the 2013 General Session for the fiscal notes that they are responsible for. We can fall back on the paper process if something happens to the SOFTWARE SOLUTION. This will also allow us to get feedback from the users to find out what works and what doesn’t work. So there will be some development after the 2013 General Session to make changes before it becomes stable for the next General Session.

Question #22

In the software specifications #7, it states the software must be written in Java. Why are you requiring the software to be written in Java only and not any other object oriented languages like C#, Visual Basic or PHP?

Answer #22

That requirement is changed as follows:

We prefer that the SOFTWARE SOLUTION be written in Java, because much of our web development is in Java and Java, in our experience, works well for web-based applications. We will accept C# or Visual Basic. We do not have as much in-house expertise in PHP, so we will not accept PHP. It is important that legislative IT staff be able to maintain the SOFTWARE SOLUTION in the long term.